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FABIAN RESEARCH

Quarterly Report

The Society's current program of research work covers the Social Services, Education, Food Policy, Primary Produce, Colonial Problems, and Services for Raid Victims. Except for the last item, all these projects are of sufficient long-term and general value to support intensive work, without being so remote as to be unrelated to the war-time situation. Services for Raid Victims is a subject so topical, and involving the well-being of such large sections of the community (we are all in a sense raid victims), that the Social Services Committee decided to include it.

We are extremely grateful for the ungrudging work of those of our members who are still available for research, and hope that they will continue to help. Many members are now in the country, and we should like to hear from those who can still do work for us. We also should be glad if they would come into the Society's offices when they are in London, and discuss possibilities of further help.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The major work in hand is the preparation of a Social Security scheme for this country, comparably to that of New Zealand, and more comprehensive than that of the USA. For many years our social services were ahead of other countries', but they have developed piecemeal, and are now an incongruous mixture of social insurance, centrally administered allowances, and rate-aided Public Assistance. The result is that not only are payments uneven, many of them ignoring a man's dependants, but, as the Blitzkrieg has shown, 'the applicant' must traipse from office to office, stating his problem at each—a wasteful, ignominious, and inconvenient proceeding. A Social Security scheme would arrange for the co-ordination of our existing services, remodelled as necessary, and should include Family Allowance provisions. Research work during the Spring will be devoted to a study of the many problems involved in the initiation of such a scheme.

The work on the Means Test is now completed and has resulted in a memorandum setting out the principles which should govern the application of personal means tests. Work is also being done on the Assistance Board, which, with its extended powers, is a powerful social agency meriting the closest attention. Welfare provisions outside the factory for munition workers and their children is also being studied. The Research Secretary would welcome information from members both on the local reputation and work of the Assistance Board, and on the welfare of munition workers.

FOOD

The Food Committee continues to enquire into war-time distribution and production. Memoranda are in preparation on Bread, Import Policy, Eggs and Poultry, Feeding Stuffs. An

article on Government Meat Policy is published in this issue, and the Perry Report on Milk Distribution is being considered.

COLONIAL BUREAU

The Fabian Colonial Bureau, born two months ago, is already finding its feet. Its declared aim is to act as a clearing-house for colonial information and research, and to interest the public, the press, and Parliament in colonial problems. The Bureau was, from the start, prepared for many obstacles in its work, as a lack of interest in the colonies has always been a notorious feature of British political life. But contrary to expectation, the response from all sides has been remarkable. Those journalists and newspapers who have been approached, and requested to deal more fully with colonial matters of current interest (such as cocoa-burning in West Africa, or the effect on Jamaica of the banana import ban) have been very willing to use the information which the Bureau has supplied, in their columns. The *Daily Herald*, the *Manchester Guardian* and the *New Statesman* have responded particularly well. This success is encouraging the Bureau to aim still further afield in interesting the bulk of the British press, provincial as well as London, in empire problems.

Similarly, Members of Parliament are showing themselves extremely anxious to help in any way they can. The Bureau is building up a panel of MPs who are willing to champion the cause of the colonies as occasion arises, and to arouse in the House of Commons some appreciation of the needs of our Empire.

On the research side, two books are on their way to publication, and a series of studies on colonial commodities has now been inaugurated. These studies deal with the present and future position of wheat, cotton, cocoa, rubber, copper, tin, etc., and are the first step towards evolving a rational post-war plan for lifting the colonies out of their present poverty.

In general, the eager response which the Bureau's initiative is evoking seems to suggest a new awareness in Britain of our duties and problems as an imperial power. If the Bureau can contribute to this awareness, and help point the way to a happier future for the colonial peoples, it will have amply justified its existence.

OTHER ITEMS

Work on a Labour Policy for Post-Primary Education is proceeding as far as time and opportunity allow. In connection with this a report is being prepared on training for architecture.

A Tract on *Billeting in Reception Areas* is in preparation as a supplement to *Evacuation Survey*, and a report on co-ordination of services for raid-victims in the London Boroughs is now being drafted.

Professor Levy's work on Trade Associations continues, and promises to provide most interesting and important material.

THIS PEOPLE'S ARMY

Thomas Stevens

Recently the Society instituted an inquiry into Army conditions. At the suggestion of one of our members who is in uniform, we sent out a questionnaire on Army life which dealt with six aspects: pay, living conditions, education, Army training, promotion, and morale. Many of our members in the Forces have now replied to the questions we put and this article is based upon those answers. The answers vary considerably in length and detail and show the very different conditions that exist in different units of the Army. Naturally, any quotations that we give must remain strictly anonymous.

PAY

On the subject of pay, we asked the following questions: how does the system of payment for soldiers and their wives work? is payment made promptly and is it regular and uniform? what sort of deductions are made and do they seem reasonable?

First of all it is clear that all are agreed that the ordinary ranker's pay is insufficient. Several answers particularly stress the hardship suffered by the married man, half of whose 14/- a week must go to make up the allowance to his wife. In spite of recent concessions it is also clear that dependents' allowances are too meagre, thus causing a considerable number of applications to the Hardship Committees. The system of payment appears to vary to a great extent. In some units the weekly pay parade takes half a day, and in most units it is a matter of several hours' queueing-up. Annoyance is naturally expressed by the Sappers who stand in threes for one or two hours, waiting for their pay and not permitted to smoke or to talk. Most paymasters adopt the system of round sums, so that a Gunner, for example, finds himself being paid 12/- one week, 15/- the next, £1 the following week, and then back to 12/- again, and so forth. Moreover, soldiers rarely seem to get their full pay. A private gets, say, 10/- instead of 14/-; the 4/- is partly deductions and partly put to his credit, from which he can pay fines, etc. This credit system is a form of compulsory savings and the source of a good deal of difficulty. It is usually difficult after some time for the soldier to find out how much he has got to his credit—and sometimes he may suddenly find out that he is in debt to the paymaster.

The deductions made also vary. In some infantry units it appears that deductions vary from 3d. to 1/6 a month. In artillery units they go as high as 2/- a month. These are usually for subscriptions to the sports fund, the Regimental Association, the supply

of radio sets, hair-cuts, and barrack-room damage. No explanation is usually offered to the private of the nature of his deduction and even when he demands an explanation he sometimes receives an evasive reply. There occur cases where deductions are made for things which are not delivered, for example, hair-cuts. An extra 6d. a week is supposed to be paid for 'cleaning materials' in many units, but it is rarely received because it seems to be automatically deducted for some unspecified insurance.

There are many other minor questions that need to be looked into, but the dominating features concerning pay are undoubtedly its insufficiency and, on the other side, the ignorance that prevails concerning the system of credits and deductions. An Officer Cadet of the R.A. says :

'Soldier's pay and family allowances must obviously be revised if the cost of living increases to any appreciable degree. Both pay and allowances leave little or nothing over the bare necessities of life and without supplements the fixed family allowance is often not sufficient for these needs. A good case can be made for a still further increase in family allowances from the number of applicants who have to have it increased through hardship. And as I have pointed out it is often a difficult and long business to obtain an increase.'

In the case of the system of credits and deductions, it is obviously necessary that in every unit the system should be fully explained to the soldiers, that they should have access to the accounts, and that they should have some control over the stoppages that are to be made.

LIVING CONDITIONS

Food

There is general agreement that the food provided for the troops is of good quality. But there is considerable divergence of opinion about the cooking and the serving. The authorities responsible for the cooking and the serving are either the Messing Committee or the A.T.S. Where the A.T.S. run the cookhouse, it seems to be fairly efficient and 'altogether better than others'. The 'others' seem to murder a good deal of the food in process of cooking or at any rate to fail to serve meals hot. Some annoyance is caused by the usual queueing-up. One Sapper remarks that his queue is often 25 minutes long at breakfast-time and that 'the tail members drift off in despair at ever getting in'. In some infantry units—and perhaps others—there seems to be need for the provision of a good supper, as the last meal provided each day is at 5.30 p.m.

The N.A.A.F.I. Canteen Service seems to be fairly well run in most cases, but there is a universal complaint about the charges.

Some soldiers allege enormous profiteering. In an engineering unit it is common talk that the profiteering is so outrageous that the officers must have shares in N A A F I ! Undoubtedly things could be much cheaper.

Housing

There is a wide variety in the experience of housing and billeting conditions. A bad case :

‘ One barrack-room was underground, ill-ventilated, rat-infested, lit throughout the day by oil-lamps, and approachable through a 120 ft. pitch-dark tunnel : washing, etc., had to be done in the open-air.’

This place had been condemned by the Medical Officer. There are quite a few instances of bad over-crowding and unnecessary inconveniences. For example, there are no lockers in many barrack-rooms which means that everything has to be put under the bed.

Medical Services

The general opinion on medical services seems to be well-summed up in the phrase : ‘ Good for serious illnesses, otherwise poor’. Specialist treatment is adequate, but cases of influenza for example, are often badly dealt with. Such a case, says a private in a Machine-Gun unit, is usually left in bed in the barrack-room, instead of being taken to hospital. Every morning he will have to appear in the room of the Medical Inspector on sick-parade. This marching about of the ‘flu patients accounts for a good deal of the spread of infection. Inoculations also lead to trouble occasionally. A Gunner remarks how : ‘ In the case of my own squad the necessary inoculations have had to be performed twice owing to mismanagement, and may have to be done again’.

The only opinion we elicited on the dental service stated that it was very prompt and competent.

Any Complaints ?

An interesting set of replies dealt with the machinery for making complaints and suggestions. A large number of these were highly ironical. A Lieutenant, R A O C, knows of no system of making complaints except that introduced by individual officers, which, he says, is frequently excellent. A Sapper states that any attempt to make a helpful suggestion, let alone a complaint, is regarded as insolence ; no difference, he says, is recognised between suggestion and complaint, and between complaint and criticism of your superiors—and all are treated as insubordination. There are several examples of this attitude to complaints. And in a variety of units suggestions are obviously not invited. Where the machinery exists, a complaint from a ranker must go through the hierarchy of N C O's and officers to the Commanding Officer.

Complaints and suggestions cannot be presented direct to the C O without any intermediate stage. It is usual that the NCO in some way or other prevents complaints going forward. There is undoubtedly a general need for an entirely different attitude to complaints and suggestions and for some machinery whereby officers can be approached direct.

EDUCATION

Opportunities for education? Practically nil, is the chorus of our informers, writing in September to October, 1940. Most of the new soldiers have never heard of any educational facilities in the Forces and have the impression that discussion of serious topics is officially discouraged. When the war began, the Army Education Corps was transferred to 'other duties'; and in any case the A E C was never organised to provide adult education. There is only one mention of the A E C in the replies that we have received—and that is in connection with an attempt on the part of some men in a unit to transfer to the A E C, for which they were stigmatised as cowards! In some cases, particularly infantry units, doubt is expressed as to the value of educational facilities; the view is taken simply that the men don't want them. On the other hand, these soldiers take rather a narrow view of education, thinking of it in terms of going back to school. In the specialist units of the Service there is more demand for classes and discussion and discontent about the lack of them. No Fabians in uniform seem to have come across the University Regional Committees. In one infantry unit the soldiers were invited to attend a W.E.A. Class, but none went. In general, the replies show the need for an adequate educational organisation within the Army which can cover all units and all branches.

The question of freedom of discussion in the Army depends very largely upon the individual officer. Some officers encourage discussion amongst their men and in some units where lectures are given, the atmosphere is as free as in any adult education class. But in the majority of cases it appears that discussion is officially discouraged and considered dangerous.

From this Inquiry you would gather that the situation in regard to the supply of newspapers and books, etc., is appalling. Sometimes there is a reading-room; usually not. Soldiers who want to read frequently have to go to the canteen room where the lighting is poor and there is the constant tap-tap-tap of ping-pong. Some newspapers are usually available; always the *Daily Mail*. The majority of our replies state that there is no proper library in the units. A typical comment on a small library in an engineering

unit is that 'it's full of old-fashioned stuff'. Educational provision and the supply of reading matter go together and when the authorities get going in the organisation of the one, they will have to reorganise the other.

Entertainment

For some weird reason, *Fabjus*, who drafted the questionnaire, put education and entertainment in one bag, *a la* War Office. Perhaps he foresaw that the answers would be all of a piece. 'Little recreation', 'no entertainment', 'bad fortnightly concert', 'one concert in ten weeks'—here are some samples. A gunner expresses forcibly the opinion that ENSA is not doing its job effectively and that entertainment is not being provided where it is most needed. Clearly it is most needed in units isolated in small villages and remote places, for example, particularly Ack-Ack units. But the tendency is for concerts to be provided in the big halls of towns where large numbers of troops are stationed, but where there are plenty of picture palaces and other centres of amusement. The same is broadly true about the supply of films.

Sport is on the whole well-organised as we should expect, because the good old public-school spirit in the officers sees to it that 'the chaps' have plenty of football and boxing to develop their bodies even if nothing is done to develop their minds.

ARMY TRAINING

It is generally held that there is too much drill in the training programme and not enough modern tactics. Several infantrymen complain about the amount of time spent in balancing equipment and the old 'spit-and-polish' system. A Colonel states roundly that the infantry is still being trained for the last rather than the next war. Inadequacy is also found in the instructors. One of our gunners puts the point in the form of a need for instructors 'who really believe in the training'. Another soldier feels that his Commanding Officer's attitude to the men is to treat them either as 'children, criminals, or lumps of muck'. On the other hand, several of our correspondents find their training pretty adequate, if a bit slow. Individual officers again can do a great deal to make the training more interesting and to introduce new elements. Undoubtedly intelligent soldiers would like to learn more in the normal training programme about strategical and tactical questions and about 'the lessons of France'. Another interesting point is that the training programme does not seem to give a general picture of the war machine but rather concentrates simply on teaching the men what their own particular unit does and ought to do, without very much reference to the activities and rôles of other branches.

We have received very little information in answer to a question about the amount of time spent in (a) military training ; (b) physical training, not specifically military ; and (c) non-military duties. From the replies one gets the impression that there is very little of (b) and (c). In most units there is some ordinary P T but not very much, for example, a typical gunner does $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour of P T daily for the first eight weeks of training.

The special capacities of individual recruits are fairly well used, for example, cooking, driving motor-vehicles, etc. One Sapper states that in his unit skilled chefs are put on to dig whilst plate-layers do the cooking, but this seems to be exceptional. There is always room for improvement in this field and doubtless a really democratic army could produce a better division of labour, but we may welcome the recognition of talent already taking place.

PROMOTION

Is there equality of opportunity in promotion from the ranks ? Has the quality of officers improved ? Have the Belisha reforms democratised the spirit of the army ? The general opinion is NO. It is still generally true that to become an officer you must have had a public school and/or university education, probably be a 'gentleman', and usually have the 'right' outlook. It is interesting that those who deal with this question in detail point out that with a class-ridden educational system it is practically impossible to democratise the army in this respect. Promotion depends partly on educational qualifications and partly on capacity for leadership. By not having the necessary matriculation standard of education the majority of working-class soldiers are automatically ruled out. Moreover the public school boys have been given the capacity for leadership by being trained in the Officers' Training Corps, and since promotion depends on the recommendation of the Commanding Officer of the unit who is a gent, public school, etc, naturally the gents have it. The procedure for promotion is that the soldier applies through the Platoon Commander and the Company Commander to the Battalion Commander and his chances depend on his having the matriculation standard and being a good interviewee. It is true that more Grammar School boys get through today, but this has not produced really equal opportunities. Opinions vary about the effect of the necessary three months or so in the ranks before the potential officer goes to the Officer Cadet Training Unit. Some think that this creates a spirit of comradeship between the new officers and the men, but a gunner emphasises that a public school boy cannot learn much about the working-class in three months except that they are 'good chaps'. They are perhaps

more friendly to the men but their fundamental attitude has not changed.

A group of Sappers actually state that the attitude of their officers is 'pure Prussianism'. A gunner talks about the younger officers in his unit as 'a mass of pansy and effeminate young subalterns'. A more moderate opinion about the relation between officers and other ranks is that of a 2nd Lieut. of infantry who says that the officers are 'a class apart, but the classes are friendly and that is the first stage'. It seems that there is not much discontent about the type and quality of officers and a general assumption that they must be what they are. On the other hand, a source of class-feeling within the Army is the difference in the standard of living of the officers, i.e., in the 'messes'. This is particularly so in the infantry and is a matter of scaling-up the pay and living conditions of the rankers.

A really democratic spirit in the army seems to be rare. The army is after all a mirror of the differences in wealth, educational opportunity and the like in the society it serves. And it tends, on the whole, to lag behind in the introduction and application of reforms designed to lay the bases of real democracy. The Belisha reforms were pure eye-wash without radical changes in the standards of pay and opportunities of gaining educational qualifications.

MORALE

The question of morale is very largely determined by the other things we have been analysing. Obviously, for example, where living conditions are bad, morale tends to be low. Some opinions on this point are that morale is 'dreadful', that boredom is 'a pressing problem' and that soldiers desire 'anything for a change'. Certainly during the winter and this phase of the war, boredom is widespread. Particularly in isolated units and where there are many routine jobs to be done there is a need for special measures of combating the effects of the Bore War. In the infantry a 2nd Lieut. emphasises the need for allowing soldiers to get out. There is too much 'confined to barracks'; and a Colonel advises 'increased weekend leave to the limit'. Some soldiers are so fed-up that they want to get back to their civilian jobs where they feel they would be more useful, and an officer of the Royal Artillery suggests that they ought to be put on to the job of digging deep shelters. Some soldiers have been released for pressing civilian work or used to repair air-raid damage, but there are great dangers in this situation where men in uniform may be used as cheap labour. It is necessary clearly to distinguish military and civilian industrial work and for the trade unions to see that soldiers employed on the latter receive the standard rates of pay.

One aspect of the morale question we have already dealt with in the section on Education. One or two of our correspondents are sceptical of the value of lectures and classes and libraries as a means of raising the level of morale ; but there is a strong demand for educational facilities, particularly interesting lectures on tactics and the conduct of the war, as also for more and more radio sets and decent books. War Aims, we gather, are not discussed amongst the troops, and there is a good deal of cynicism in discussion on the conduct of the war. Intelligent soldiers are fed-up with official blah and stale communiqués. There are some examples of the 'exterminate the Germans!' feeling, but very few. Raising morale is not just a question of relieving boredom, but rather one of creating and maintaining an active interest in those things about which we are supposed to be fighting. When asked how the army could be employed during the winter, failing its use in field operations, many Fabians in uniform stoutly replied: more training and more intelligent training.

SUMMARY

The replies we have been analysing have come from a comparatively few individuals representing very different units, including infantry, artillery, ordnance, and engineering. Space has not permitted us to go into great detail on any of the points, but the questionnaire has drawn out instances of many serious problems in the modern army. Bernard Shaw summarised the characteristics of the army as 'snobbery, jobbery, incompetence and red-tape' and there is undoubtedly plenty of snobbery, incompetence and red-tape left. The modern army is an army of citizens and not of professional soldiers, and its character changes rapidly. The soldiers are responsible citizens and should be treated accordingly. But in a host of respects they are not. Their pay is insufficient and administered under a system which is unexplained and sometimes inexplicable to most of them. Their living conditions are frequently poor and stupidly arranged. Their training programme is over-weighted with drill intended to make them robots rather than thinking fighters and too full of spit-and-polish rather than tactics. There is too much ordering from above and a lack of machinery for constructive criticism from below. Because of the educational system, the officers are drawn from a small class. But as yet the Army and the education authorities make feeble attempts to remedy this system and general educational opportunities are not provided. Naturally boredom afflicts such an army and can only be combated successfully by radical reform. In this article we have confined ourselves to suggesting the spheres in which these reforms are most necessary.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN DECLINE ?

John Sullivan

It has always been the custom to point to our system of local government as one of the outstanding features of British democracy. Our series of local authorities, guided and financially assisted by the central government, but essentially independent, self-governing, and consisting of democratically elected councillors, has stood out in sharp contrast to the centralised continental systems of local government. Since the outbreak of the present war, however, there are many signs that an unobtrusive, but none the less decisive, change has been taking place in the relations between the central and local authorities. That happy contrast with the continent is no longer so convincing as it used to be. A long stride has already been taken towards establishing a purely administrative apparatus consisting of local officials responsible, not to public opinion in the localities, but directly to the government departments concerned with the various local services. What is the extent of this change and how has it come about ?

Three things above all seem to be responsible—the failure of the government, in spite of repeated warnings from many quarters, to reform the rating system in the years before the war when the necessity for such a reform had become clear, its equally obstinate refusal to reorganise the antiquated machinery of local government, and the abrogation of the principle that all councillors should periodically seek reelection.

THE FINANCIAL DISTRESS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

In the five years before the war the annual sum collected in rates by local authorities rose by 22% from £155 millions to £189 millions. With little encouragement or additional financial assistance from the government the local authorities, once the economy campaign of the slump years was over, made an attempt to improve their social services and, in doing so, they strained the rating system near to its limit in many places. Rates approaching 20/- in the pound became steadily more common. It became increasingly clear—to practically everyone except the government—that the antiquated rating system, derived from the Middle Ages, provided a totally inadequate financial basis for the continued

development of local services and constituted the real barrier in the way of further progress ; but nothing whatsoever was done about it.

At this point the war broke out. Local authorities were faced with the enormous additional expenditure required to provide the entirely new service of air raid precautions. Some of the larger cities, and London in particular, together with a number of coastal towns, suffered a serious loss of rate income by the evacuation of many of their ratepayers. It is true that the drastic reduction in capital expenditure enforced by the Treasury, the prohibition of nearly all street lighting, the transfer of supplementary old age pensions to the Assistance Board, and the reduction in standards of highway maintenance and in other services, enabled local authorities to effect certain savings. But if their financial position was not seriously weakened by the outbreak of war, it was certainly not materially improved. How, then, was the heavy additional expenditure on civil defence to be met ?

There could be only one way—from the National Exchequer. In the years before the war the building up of an efficient civil defence service was seriously delayed because the Treasury refused to concede the justifiable demand by the local authorities for a 100% grant. Finally in 1937 a rate of grant ranging from 60% to 85% was fixed. But even this was not enough. On the outbreak of war the government arranged to reimburse in full the wages of all A R P personnel and the compensation payable on premises taken for civil defence purposes. They agreed also to pay the whole cost of the materials required for the construction of shelters, and they provided free a great deal of equipment. Thus although the principle of a 100% grant has not yet been conceded, in practice local authorities receive a grant which does not fall far short of 100%. Unfortunately complete figures are not yet obtainable, but the Abstracts of Accounts already published by a number of towns (and kindly supplied by their Borough Treasurers to the Fabian Society) do not show a lower rate of grant than 80% during the year ending on 31st March 1940. Since then the government have undertaken the whole cost of shelters, of salvaging goods and removing debris, of storing furniture and of various other types of expenditure. These accounts do not allow for the free provision of equipment on a large scale, and those I have seen do not relate to any of the poorer authorities which qualify for a higher rate of grant. Thus it will probably not be far wrong to estimate that in general local authorities are now receiving a grant from the government equal to between 80% and 95% of their expenditure on civil defence. As Dr.

Robson pointed out in an article in the *Political Quarterly* for July–September 1940, the net result of all this assistance from the government was that the average rate burden due to A R P for the whole country was only just over 3d during the year ended 31st March 1940 (seven months of war). This is a rate of grant for a major service which is unparalleled in the history of local government.

The government has saved local authorities from bankruptcy—but they have forfeited a large slice of their independence as a result. It was not to be expected that the Treasury would permit local authorities to spend so much government money without demanding in return that they should submit themselves to the most stringent control. In fact, the Ministers of Home Security and of Health exercise a detailed supervision of the most rigid kind over the branches of civil defence which they respectively control. Hardly a day passes without the arrival of some circular, if not three or four, giving the most minute instructions on some aspect of civil defence. Any initiative or enterprise that local authorities may ever have possessed is buried under this veritable avalanche of circulars. If any does survive, and a novel proposal is made by some council, it will probably so astonish the officials at the Ministry that they will take several months to make up their minds about it. Circulars from the Ministry of Home Security, moreover, are beginning to refer to the ‘A R P Controller’ instead of to the ‘Council’. There can be no objection to this when dealing with problems arising out of the actual operations of A R P services during a raid, which must necessarily be handled in a uniform manner throughout a region and on rather military lines in the form of instructions from one official to another. But it is an entirely new departure when a government department instructs an official of the council how to deal with a purely administrative problem. No doubt some A R P controllers consult their emergency committees before taking action on circulars of this type. But they reveal an attitude of mind alien to the traditions of British local government, which is perhaps not surprising when it is remembered that the majority of the officials of the Ministry of Home Security had no previous experience of local government and were recruited to a considerable extent from retired officers of the army. Moreover, there are not lacking A R P controllers of the strong-man type who have taken their cue from the Ministry and have established themselves as virtual A R P dictators of their districts.

The significance of this novel subordination of local to central government in A R P matters is brought out when it is realised

what great importance civil defence expenditure has assumed in relation to the total expenditure of local authorities. Already in the year ending on 31st March 1940, which included only seven months of war, some representative County Boroughs spent from 10—20% of their total expenditure on civil defence. The proportion for this year may well reach 25—30%. The expenditure of Metropolitan Boroughs on A R P is now probably about equal to the whole of their normal peace-time expenditure. Moreover, civil defence is not a service which can be isolated from all other local services. Almost every ordinary service maintained by local authorities is affected in some degree by air raid precautions; hospitals must be provided with shelters, and so on. Thus the dictatorial methods of the Ministry of Home Security exercise a wider influence over local administration than might appear at first sight.

If this new attitude to local government was confined to the A R P services the position might not be so serious as it is. But that is not the case. The same attitude has been equally evident in the Ministry of Health since the beginning of the war, and has the same financial basis. The government has undertaken to bear 100% of any additional cost which local authorities may incur under the evacuation scheme. If the various evacuation schemes which have followed one another since the outbreak of war are to be condemned for their extraordinary lack of foresight and incompetence, the blame does not lie wholly with the local authorities. They were hardly consulted, if at all, when the scheme was drawn up before the war. And the actual schemes, fortified by the usual mass of circulars, leave but little scope for the exercise of any local initiative. In the words of the Director of Education for Manchester: 'The government evacuation scheme is essentially a Whitehall product which has developed along much more centralised or bureaucratic lines than those to which we are accustomed in this country'

The same state of affairs prevails in the arrangements made for rehousing the homeless. There again the scheme was devised by a few Whitehall officials; again the whole cost is borne by the government, and again the local authorities have very little voice in the arrangements. The government has even felt compelled to appoint a special Commissioner to instruct London local authorities how to behave in the matter; and they must perforce obey, for he wields the financial whip. How many councils, for example, could face with equanimity the increased charge on the rates which would be involved in taking over hotels instead of schools as rest centres?

LOCAL ELECTIONS

It is not possible, however, to explain the present submissive-ness of local authorities to the central government entirely by the fact that the rating system has been strained to its limits. A novel attitude of extreme servility appears to have spread over the face of local government. This may have many causes. In their eagerness to cooperate in the war effort, many local authorities may have felt it wrong in principle to diverge to the smallest extent from the policy laid down by the government. But there is more to it than this. On the outbreak of war Parliament prohibited all local elections. Safe in their seats for the duration, many councillors are bound to pay less regard to the opinions of their electors than they used to. Disquieting developments are already occurring. Lambeth elected a Labour majority to the council before the war. Quite recently five leading Labour councillors, who became dissatisfied with their colleagues for various reasons, began to vote with the Tories, thus reversing the position so that a Tory majority is beginning to take shape. Will anyone assert that this represents the wishes of the electors of Lambeth ? In addition to all this, some councillors, while retaining their seats, apparently have no time to spare for council work. Many of them have been evacuated with their businesses, or are away on Government service or in the army. In a number of cases they have set up small emergency committees to conduct all or nearly all of the business of the council in between council meetings, which take place at longer intervals than was customary in peace time. Many councils have severely restricted the number of committees and sub-committees. Brighton appointed a special expenditure committee of three which for a time had complete power to make economies and to act without first getting the approval of the council. There can be little doubt that, over the whole field of local government, councillors have become less responsive to public opinion and have left more work in the hands of officials than ever before. This surely accounts to a certain extent for the way in which nearly all local authorities accommodate themselves with so little protest to the policy of the government. It is true that the organisation of local elections in war time would prove difficult. But would it not be a hundred times worth while to expend a little energy in overcoming these difficulties in order to retain an element of democracy in our local government, especially in view of the fact that evacuation must have rendered the composition of many councils quite unrepresentative of their local populations ? If the members of the Stepney borough council were no longer considered capable of carrying out their civil defence duties

properly, why could not Mr. Morrison arrange for a local election instead of taking the unprecedented step of appointing a local dictator of the A R P services ? Parliament's declared contempt for the value of elections in war time—witness also the political truce and the Friendly Societies Act—is likely to have steadily more serious repercussions on the efficiency of local administration as the war proceeds.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT MACHINERY

It is probably true to say that (1) almost every local authority in the country covers too small an area, and (2) the double-decker system of local government in the counties, whereby two sets of authorities exercise different but closely related functions in the same area independently of one another, is quite unsuited to modern conditions in its present form. These defects were bad enough for ordinary peace time administration. They could not be left unremedied in war time. The evacuation of the large cities has greatly increased the population in those parts of the country which have the least efficient type of local administration and have therefore least been able to bear the strain of providing the additional services required. Faced as it was with this problem before the war, the government might have taken the difficult course of reorganising the whole system. It chose, however, a much easier and more authoritarian solution. Twelve Regional Commissioners were appointed ; they were subsequently endowed with complete power to supersede any local authority in their region and to transform themselves into local dictators (Defence Regulation 29A). Their normal work is mainly confined to civil defence, but as pointed out above, very few activities of local authorities are not affected by A R P in some way. The first example of a more drastic exercise of these powers appears to have occurred in Coventry after the heavy air raid, when the council and the emergency committee were for a time completely superseded by an outside authority appointed from above. In London, where the problems arising out of the existence of a multiplicity of local authorities are more acute than anywhere else in the country, the government is adopting the Regional Commissioner solution with a vengeance. To the original three commissioners appointed to deal with A R P, there have been added two more, one concerned with the repair of public utilities and clearance of debris, the other with the rehousing of the homeless. How long will it be before London has a Regional Commissioner for health problems, another for communal feeding, and a third for education ?

Generally speaking, the Regional Commissioners already

appointed are men who have made their reputations for their activities in the world of big business and high finance, rather than for any interest they ever took in local government. They are solely responsible to the Minister of Home Security, and need not care a fig for the feelings of the people living in their regions or for the opinions of the local authorities previously elected to represent them. Of all the developments that have occurred since the outbreak of war, these commissioners undoubtedly constitute the most dangerous threat to the future of local democracy.

POSSIBLE REMEDIES

If democracy means anything, it means that the people for whom social services are provided must have a voice in the running of these services if they are to be adequate and *efficient*. Only a body consisting of representatives elected by the people and remaining in the closest touch with the people can generate sufficient drive and energy to overcome local vested interests and obstruction by government departments. This principle has been decisively abandoned in organising the three new services required by the war, namely, civil defence, evacuation and rehousing the homeless. This is not the place to discuss the construction of bomb-proof shelters, the billeting arrangements in reception areas or the provision of comfortable rest centres. But can anyone deny that the results of the new authoritarian methods have been anything other than a conspicuous failure? Something must be done to remedy this state of affairs before it is too late.

First of all, a new spirit of independence is required among local authorities. Admittedly their financial position is extremely weak. But they have no right to make this, as so many of them do, the excuse for obeying implicitly every order issued by the government. They should remember that they are as indispensable to the government as the Treasury is to them. There have sometimes been suggestions that civil defence should have been made a separate organisation quite distinct from the existing local authorities. But surely this would have been quite impracticable; the government simply could not do without the existing technical and administrative organisations built up by local authorities in the last hundred years. If only local councils, individually and collectively, would stand up for themselves in something of the style of the Poplar Borough Council under the leadership of George Lansbury after the last war, the government would soon be compelled to pay more attention to their demands. Signs are not wanting that some councils are beginning to bestir themselves. The Manchester Food Control Committee recently made a spirited

protest to the Minister of Food at the usurpation by his regional officers of the function of deciding whether or not to prosecute for offences. Newcastle, Stockport, Bootle, Salford, Hackney, Finsbury, and several other councils are so dissatisfied with the official shelter policy that they are preparing their own schemes for safer shelters. Bermondsey and Hammersmith have not altogether abandoned their own free milk schemes simply because the government has produced one of its own with lower scales (and *not* administered through local authorities, be it noted). More local authorities should follow the example set by these towns, and should be ready at times to risk spending money out of the rates on schemes for which they cannot immediately secure government approval.

So much for the improvement which is needed in the local authorities themselves. In addition, the following measures would greatly assist :

(1) It is obviously difficult to introduce any far-reaching reform of the rating system in war time. But there can be no reasonable objection to the abolition of the derating of industry. Most factories could well afford to pay their fair share of the rates without undue hardship, and this would add the valuable sum of between £20 and £30 millions to the local exchequers.

(2) Grants should be given by government departments more freely, that is to say, they should not be coupled with such detailed instructions on how they may be spent as they are at present. Local authorities should be given more scope to find their own solutions to each problem, and their own schemes should not invariably have to receive prior approval before expenditure on them can rank for grant. Undoubtedly this more equal partnership between central and local authorities would cost slightly more than the present policy, but the average council could be trusted not to abuse its position. A few extra millions a year is a small price to pay when the survival of independent local government is at stake.

(3) Some method of holding local elections, of transforming councillors into genuine representatives of the people, must be devised. Everything that has been said above on the need for a more vigorous spirit among local authorities depends on this. A new spirit will not arise by itself ; it must be injected and inspired from below.

(4) Regional Commissioners should be subjected to some form of control by the people living in their regions. Some form of regional council might be set up which would meet regularly and to whom the Commissioner would be responsible.

COLONIAL BLIND ALLEY

Rita Hinden

(Secretary, Fabian Colonial Bureau)

The following paragraph appeared in a West African paper last August :

At Kumasi, in the cocoa-growing area of the Gold Coast, an unusual and pathetic incident happened at the Central Market . . . A good-looking woman, unmarried, strolled up and down the place weeping bitterly. When asked why she was weeping, she is alleged to have said that owing to the present war condition she was out of employment and consequently hungry. She added that she wanted a man to take her to wife without paying a farthing provided he would take care of her.

In October, the *Jamaica Times* printed this passage on its front page :

An increasing number of comparatively young mothers, each with a large number of children to support, are being weekly added to the pauper rolls of both Kingston and St. Andrew. Their incidence to poor relief in numbers has been a recent development, and is directly traceable to the heightened unemployment and under-employment occasioned by the war . . . It was disclosed last week that the number of persons on relief in Kingston alone totals 2,400.

One year of war has brought poverty and distress to most of our African colonies and to the West Indies. This fact, and the need to do something about it, is being gradually appreciated in this country. At the same time, other British colonies are booming. Malaya is selling her tin and rubber in eager markets ; Kenya, the only British colony which is, at the moment, a theatre of war, has become a hive of activity.

‘Kenya is not losing through this campaign,’ writes the *East African Standard*. ‘Very large sums of money are being spent in the country. The prosperity we see around may be temporary, but it is real enough at present. A great and growing market for almost all we can produce has been provided for us, several of our export crops . . . are being regularly purchased by the British Government, commerce is having its full share of the better business resulting from the arrival of thousands of troops, and the troops themselves have money to spend.’

NEED FOR A POLICY

One cannot, therefore, generalise about the colonies in wartime. But boom or depression alike, the troubling question must be

answered, what economic policy are we evolving to deal with the present and the future of our colonies? Are we to allow those colonies which are today blessed in their possession of essential war materials to run loose on a mad career of expansion, only to end in a grim post-war depression? And are we, at the same time, to allow the less fortunate colonies who can produce only the 'non-essentials' of wartime, to stagnate in hopelessness until peace is renewed? So far there have been few signs of any more coherent plan than this.

The economic problem which the colonies are at present posing arises from one main circumstance—that they have been developed as 'feeders' to the economic system of Europe and America, to the neglect of their own interests. They have been looked upon as exporters of exotic raw materials—palm-oil, ground-nuts, tea, coffee, cocoa, rubber, copper, cotton, tin—and much of the energy of colonial peoples has been directed towards producing these articles for our use. Far less attention and finance have been devoted to improving the home food supply, or developing simple local industries. Almost every colony that can afford it imports astounding quantities of tinned and other foodstuffs, and every type of household requirement and clothing. Those peoples who are too poor to buy imported goods, scratch some sort of a food supply from their own soil, and live without the most essential articles of apparel and furnishing. The work of educating them in a rational agricultural technique, of helping them to irrigate their land, of teaching them the elements of a balanced diet, and of encouraging the production of the most necessary household goods, is still in its earliest infancy.

Both Whitehall and the colonies themselves were growing aware of the dangers of this policy in the years before the war. An inquiry into nutrition in the colonial empire was undertaken in 1938, and the committee produced a profoundly disturbing report. But no intensive programme designed to better the position had been inaugurated by the time war broke out. September 1939 still found the colonies eagerly bent on production for export, reacting breathlessly to every fluctuation in the world's commodity markets. There seems even to have been a general expectation that war would cause an immediate boom in all primary commodities.

This boom has only materialised in respect of certain important war materials. Pretty well the whole of Europe is now blockaded against imports from the colonies, and Britain herself must conserve every inch of shipping-space for only the most vital of supplies. She must also husband her dollar exchange for war purchases in America, and this puts a severe handicap on trade between British

colonies and U S A, even were the ships available to transport the goods. Far from the boom which was anticipated, most of the colonies now find themselves with woefully contracted export markets, with rising prices of imports (if they can get imports at all) and with little chance of buying machinery to develop local production. Their plight is monthly becoming more serious.

In some instances the British Government has stepped in directly to prevent catastrophe. A number of colonial crops have been bought up at fixed prices. But praiseworthy as this has been, it offers no complete solution. Britain can obviously not consume and transport the entire production of the colonies, and so far no satisfactory plan has been worked out for the disposal of the surplus.

COCOA AND BANANAS

The purchase of the West African cocoa crop is the most instructive example of direct British action of this sort. Before the end of 1939 it had already been decided that Britain would buy up the whole of the crop, and a price was fixed slightly above the immediate pre-war average. No plans for processing the cocoa on the spot, or for storing it, either in West Africa or elsewhere, had been made beforehand, so that when the British Government found itself with some hundred of thousands of tons of cocoa on its hands and shipping space severely limited, there was nothing for it to do but to burn the redundant supply. This was greeted with intense indignation by the Africans, who were unable to stomach the sight of their cocoa in flames. Many pleas were put forward that the cocoa should be stored, to be released free to the hungry peoples of Europe after the war; many heated arguments were adduced proving the possibility of storing the cocoa, without difficulty, even in the West African climate. The technicalities of the matter are obscure, but in the meantime the second wartime crop is being harvested, and cocoa-burning is, apparently, to continue.

The West African population was also dissatisfied with the price which it received. Cocoa had been suffering a depression for some time before the war, and the fixed price at which Britain bought up the crop stabilised, in their eyes, the depression situation. There were many complaints about this, but that has not prevented a further cut in the price to be paid for this year's crop. In the announcement made to the Africans of the British Government's intention to purchase the 1940-1 crop at a price reduced by 20%, reference was made to the losses incurred by Britain in the previous year's transaction, and to the anticipation of even further losses in the coming year. The announcement, which was intended to prepare the Africans for the price-cut, read as follows :

‘The Government of Nigeria (or the Gold Coast) is again very conscious of the generous way in which His Majesty’s Government has come to the assistance of cocoa producers and has informed His Majesty’s Government of its grateful acceptance of the new scheme. The Government is confident it will receive the loyal co-operation of the whole of the African community, growers, shippers, and others, in making the scheme work smoothly, and that all will refrain from criticising details of a plan which, at the expense of the British taxpayer, confers so great a benefit on the cocoa industry of Nigeria.’

A Gold Coast newspaper immediately replied to this announcement :

‘Apparently the Gold Coast Government were fully alive to the fact that dissatisfaction would be caused when the details of the Control Scheme became known, as otherwise they would not have considered it necessary to ask all concerned to refrain from criticising details of the plan to control the marketing of the cocoa crops of the Gold Coast and Nigeria, which is supposed to confer great benefits on the mass of the population of the Gold Coast and part of the population of Nigeria at the expense of the British taxpayer.’

The paper proceeded to express its dissatisfaction with the scheme, and other papers joined in, in poking fun at what they called the cocoa ‘generosity scheme’.

Whatever may be the rights and wrongs of the cocoa business, one point is clear. A laudable attempt on the part of the British Government to help the cocoa producers has, in some way, miscarried. The cocoa-producers of West Africa are in a bad way, and they are dissatisfied.

A similar position is likely to arise in Jamaica now that we have banned the import of bananas into this country. Four-fifths of Jamaica’s banana crop was consumed in this country, so that our inability to continue importing bananas reduced Jamaica to a desperate plight. Again, the British Government will do its best to assist. Twelve million stems will be bought up at a price of 3/- a bunch. But the price has, up till now, been 4/6 a bunch, and last year Jamaica sold twenty million stems. Once again, there is bound to be dissatisfaction with British policy.

LIMITED BRITISH HELP

Even with the very best of intentions the buying-up of crops for destruction can never be a satisfactory policy for any length of time. What other help has the British Government been able to give ? It did, it is true, after the outbreak of war, announce amid universal applause its intention of granting £10,000,000 a year for five years, for colonial welfare and development. But this money has not yet been allocated in any significant amount. With the serious turn in the war in the spring of 1940, it was announced that the

scheme would be postponed. A number of technical difficulties have arisen—shortage of administrative staff in the colonies, owing to war conditions, the difficulty of acquiring machinery and materials for development schemes, and so on. These excuses may well be valid, but the fact remains that so far little help is being given under this head in spite of the great publicity given to the scheme at the time of its passage through Parliament, and its continued use for propaganda purposes today.

The only other planned effort in the colonial field has been the Delhi Conference, and this was admittedly designed to help the Empire's war effort, rather than to cope with the internal difficulties of each colony. So far, the results of this conference have been veiled in a certain secrecy. It is, anyway, difficult for the outsider to see exactly how new industries are to be developed in Africa and the East in any reasonably short space of time, or how whole economies are to be switched over from one activity to another, what with the present shipping difficulties, with the present problems of supply and equipment, and with the lack of imperial machinery to co-ordinate such a project. The germ of a valuable new effort is here, but one cannot believe that any immediate relief will be brought to the stricken colonies of Africa and the West Indies.

In the meantime, the chief line of action taken within the colonies has been to develop local food production and local industries, as extensively as poor means will allow. Here are the words of a Gold Coast African writing on 'An economic policy for the colonies':

'The less the Colonial Empire buys from abroad the better . . . Some people have suggested that one's patriotic duty is to buy from Britain in order to keep business active. That is a complete fallacy . . . By buying from Britain you use resources of labour and materials which are urgently needed for other purposes. It is better to buy six shirts from Britain than to buy them from a foreign country. But it is better still to buy none at all. This, then, is the programme. The Colonies must produce as much as they can in order positively to help the war effort by selling to the Allies . . . They must be as self-sufficient as possible, especially in food. They must import nothing from foreign countries, and must make as little demand as they can upon labour, materials and manufacturing plant of Britain. That is the economic contribution of the Colonies. That is how everyone can help.'

This is admirable. But how self-sufficient can the colonial peoples be, without starving and without being reduced to rags and tatters? Particularly, if we cannot let them have new equipment, and cannot give them the grants promised under the Colonial Development Fund? It is not enough to let the Colonies look to themselves, and leave them to cope alone with their own insurmountable

difficulties. The colonies are poor, they have no reserves of wealth on which to draw, they cannot tackle their present situation unaided.

A BOLDER PLAN

The depressed colonies must, therefore, have first claim on our attention. But the booming colonies can also not be left to suffer the aftermath of their present uncontrolled prosperity. A more constructive line of approach to the whole awkward problem must be found.

This approach must, in the first place, take the form of evening out the ups and downs at present being suffered by the primary producers. It can, obviously, only be worked out in conjunction with U.S.A. U.S.A. is one of the biggest customers of our colonies, and by far the best customer of many of the Latin-American states, which are our colonies' competitors. The war has cut off South America from its European markets, and U.S.A. is already showing anxiety about the difficulties in which South America is being involved. Congress has voted 500,000,000 dollars for the purchase and storage of some of these surplus crops, and there is talk in America of the New World turning in on itself as an economic unit independent of the bad Old World. This would be catastrophic for our colonies. If there is to be any scheme of storing present surpluses for release after the war, our colonies must clearly be in on it, and we should be running the scheme in conjunction with U.S.A.

Apart from such a far-reaching project, which will be as important for post-war stability as for direct wartime relief, some immediate arrangement with U.S.A. for the supply of machinery and equipment to British colonies, must be concluded. It is not until the colonies can purchase the needed equipment that any real progress can be made in the production of foods and manufactures for use on the spot. The question of dollar exchange is a major difficulty, but we may have to sacrifice some of even that precious possession to save our dependencies from ruin.

It is, also, of first-rate importance that we should proceed as rapidly as possible with the promised grants to the colonies under the Colonial Development and Welfare scheme. This would at least ensure that social services are maintained on an adequate level during wartime, however difficult new capital development may be at the moment.

These are the lines along which the country should now be thinking. The crop-buying-cum-burning policy, which has so far marked the limit of our initiative, involves both ourselves and our colonies in present loss, and holds out no permanent hope for the future.

GOVERNMENT MEAT POLICY

David Ginsburg

The Ministry of Food's Meat Policy can be conveniently divided into long and short term sections. We know of no official pronouncement on the former, though one understands from trade sources that it simply envisages the elimination of meat from the national diet. The problems of such a policy are complex, particularly as livestock represents one third of the output of the agricultural industry. There is no evidence that much attention has been paid to the major re-organisation involved. Two trends are forcing this policy upon us. Firstly, impoverishment after the war may deny us the luxury of imported livestock, now valued at some £70—£80 millions per annum, apart from £45 millions of feeding stuffs. Secondly, an increasingly serious blockade or even lengthy continuation of the war is bound to strain shipping and financial resources. These considerations apply equally over the short period. There is a relative shortage of meat; while we are unable to import or produce as much as hitherto, demand has not fallen off greatly. On the consumer's side, therefore, control was needed, and was provided by rationing. Control was, however, extended throughout the industry. At the outbreak of war the Government took over the ownership of all meat in the country, so that by 15 January 1940 any freedom of trade had been eliminated. It is at this stage that a coherent scheme begins to appear.

SUMMARY OF GOVERNMENT POLICY

No meat may be sold except to the Ministry or its agent. The farmer's output of livestock is limited by his allocation of feeding stuffs, and all stock must be registered apart from that retained for personal use. There is a guaranteed market for all livestock. When cattle are ready for marketing the Ministry of Food must be duly notified of amounts and kinds for sale. Cattle must then be brought to fixed marts for grading, which is compulsorily carried out by a district chairman of auctioneers appointed by the Ministry. There is a further certifying authority upon which farmers and retailers are represented. From the fatstock market cattle are forwarded to fixed state abattoirs for slaughtering—a process carried out by contractors at fixed rates

for the Ministry. The Ministry is further responsible for the transport of meat to the wholesale depots, a function which it hands over to the Wholesale Meat Transport Association. The retailers are compulsorily organised into butchers' buying committees. These have to place weekly orders for their members at the depots, and pay up in advance for them. Maximum quotas of course are reckoned upon the basis of rations due for registered customers.

SOME CLASSIFIED ADVANTAGES

Producers

After generally scandalous treatment of Agriculture since 1918, present livestock policy shows a vast improvement. Many of the worst risks of the trade have been eliminated. Thus the farmer is afforded a guaranteed market at an economic price. The Ministry undertakes to buy up all available produce at a price designed to take account of rises in the cost of feeding stuffs. Generally speaking the Government price policy was a wise one. Livestock prices have been allowed up some 35% to 50% without reaching those last war 'peaks', so harmful to the farmers themselves. Compulsory fatstock marketing has been beneficial in several ways. For instance, the official auctioneering board has removed the dead hand of auctioneers' rings which would force down prices at local markets. Admittedly many markets are inconveniently sited, but the distances which cattle have to travel cannot compare with pre-war treks from market to market in search of an extra penny in the lb. profit. A great advantage of this system is that it spares the farmer frequent unnecessary journeys, enabling him to spend more time on the efficient running of his farm.

Centralised Slaughtering

At the outbreak of war the Government took over 700 out of 17,000 slaughterhouses. The Ministry had originally contemplated choosing 600, but this figure was raised to 700 as a result of protests by Members of Parliament. Experience showed this amount to be inadequate, and, by the summer of 1940, 831 slaughterhouses had been selected on the merits of equipment and accessibility. Finance was so arranged that while abattoirs belonging to local authorities were utilised at their normal rates, private units were commandeered and compensated on a valuation basis. Those slaughterhouses which were not selected remained uncompensated.

The operation of centralised slaughtering was specially affected

by the position of London, where owing to the risks of air-raids it had been decided to close down Smithfield and all slaughterhouses in the London area, and have the depots furnished from centres outside. Slaughtering was consequently concentrated in the principle livestock producing areas—the West Country, the East Midlands and the Lowlands of Scotland. Theoretically swift transport is possible by main line to the principal London depots, where adequate cold storage facilities are found.

This probably constitutes the most important item in the Government scheme. The pre-war persistence of many one-man slaughterhouses made large scale experiments difficult; today, the elimination of competitors has altered things. Theoretically the advantages of centralised slaughtering lie in (a) unity of control, (b) specialisation of labour, (c) continuity of process, (d) uniform condition and appearance of the finished product, (e) adequate inspection of offals and treatment of by-products, (f) proper amenities for slaughterhouse employees. The scheme has put an end to much waste; whereas before the war most slaughtering occurred on two days of the week, the compulsory closing down of small redundant units has allowed the most efficient plant to be worked all the time without lying idle. Another wastage the Government scheme has set out to remedy relates to by-products, which should now be adequately treated.

Retailers

Before the war the retailer gambled on live-weight losing 46% in blood, offals, etc., whereas actual dead-weight fluctuated between 45% to 60% of the original figure. As centralised slaughter saves 5% on the handling of offals the marginal risk is largely cut down. Furthermore, the butcher need no longer arrange transport to his shop, which is provided inclusively by the Government, though in cases of contracting out $\frac{1}{8}$ d. rebate in the lb. is available.

Consumers

The war having nullified the benefits of efficient slaughtering and marketing, it is difficult to discern an improvement in the consumers' position. Briefly, the scheme has tried to provide the public 'with a steady stream of reasonably cheap meat'. In most cases supply has been steady, and prices relatively low, which could not have been achieved without the £315,000 weekly subsidy. The consumers' interest is further safeguarded by the profit limit which fixed prices placed on all retailing middlemen. Meat prices may not rise above a given limit, averaging 1/- per lb. wholesale and 1/5 per lb. retail.

SOME GENERAL CRITICISMS

Farmers

Some relics of dissatisfaction still persist, though most abuses have disappeared. The inefficiency of the Ministry in tardy payment for purchases and an allegedly unfair system of grading, bordering on guesswork, have been criticised, particularly when large numbers of calves were compulsorily slaughtered during the winter and the Government failed to institute appeal tribunals in cases of unfair grading. Lastly the operation of a time-lag in prices left the farmers 4% down, the subsidy failing to bridge the 26% increase in livestock and 40% increase in feeding-stuffs prices. The difficulty has been now overcome.

Slaughtering

Undeniable as may be the advantages of centralised slaughtering, the Government were influenced by other considerations apart from a purely efficient meat service in operating it. We gather from the Ministry of Food that the London area is to be denuded of abattoirs owing to air-raid dangers. The quality of London's meat supply has been undoubtedly affected by the loss of some 350 modern, well-equipped abattoirs, while at all times of the year waste and needless travel is observed that could be avoided if slaughtering were resumed in the London area. It is now certain that the Ministry worked out a scheme in advance without considering the capacity of the British railways to haul perishable meat over lengthy distances. The fact that in at least one area of London carcasses are known to have arrived in coal trucks suggests that our railways have not the cold storage for such a task. Further, the air-raid excuse is invalid, once it is realised that the primitive city corporation slaughterhouse in the heart of London has mysteriously remained open, while modern suburban abattoirs have lain idle. There have been many complaints of poorly equipped provincial abattoirs being selected, even of cat's meat butchers being favoured at the expense of better equipped competitors, so that one can only conclude that many divisional officers gave preference to those with connections over those who were otherwise better qualified to undertake slaughtering. Apart from this wastage actual shortage of cold-storage facilities is noticeable, particularly as the Government's policy is rigidly centralised and requires the use of many depots. In Northern Ireland the need has been particularly acute, though all over the country meat has been needlessly going bad. The official wastage rate of 1% can only be accounted for in the light of nationwide protests by a slack inspection service.

Retailers

This section of the trade feels more particularly victimised than any other and their complaints at the quality of meat distributed from depots is supported by the wider consuming public. Two specific abuses are cited: a haphazard grading policy and a poor health inspection service despite centralisation, allegations that seem substantially correct. Over-generous grading has hit the consumer as well, since third or fourth grade meat is being classed as grade 1 and price forced beyond the reach of working-class purchasers. 'Health' decline, too, is a widespread development since the outbreak of war. Owing to the Government ownership of imported and home produced meat, individual inspectors shrink from condemning or confiscating—a procedure which earlier they would not have hesitated to apply to small undertakings. This may well account for the preposterously low wastage rate given by the Ministry. Thus retailers are exposed to heavy loss by having to pay up in advance and receive meat that may well deteriorate. We find, therefore, a considerable volume of opposition among retailers, who hold that the bureaucracy is overstaffed with 400 odd administrative officials, including several former wholesale employees, that the qualifications of divisional officers are too laxly examined and that future appointments should be made more cautiously. Despite the prior claims on beef of the B.E.F. in France, it remains true to say that most divisional officers failed to secure a reasonable balance between beef and mutton allocations. The central dictatorship seems possessed of a needless fetish for stringency and has instituted an inquiry among all retailers who take over 80% of their quotas. In fact the national consumption of ration allowances went up from 80% in May 1940 to 85% in June, and to 90% in July. This was not due to the alleged favouring of certain customers by butchers, but to three causes which the Ministry itself recognised. Firstly, the contemporary egg shortage; secondly the fact that many workers had more money to spend, and thirdly because more people bought meat because they were working harder. Finally the treatment of retailers, both cooperative and private, whose slaughterhouses have been compulsorily closed down and left subject to rates, might be profitably compared with that of the eliminated middlemen, now Government auctioneers.

Consumers

Many consumers' criticisms have been considered under the last heading. Though actual meat shortages in certain localities have been overcome, working-class consumers who cannot afford

a ration at 1/5 per lb, compared with 1/1 per lb. pre-war, find unrationed offals rising in price and falling into the lap of the 'greedier' middle-class purchaser. From a consumer's point of view, therefore, a scheme which set out to provide a steady flow of cheap meat has not been an unqualified success.

VESTED INTERESTS IN THE CONTROL

There are good grounds for believing that the meat scheme is being worked inefficiently and expensively to ensure an easy return to pre-war methods. Thus the cattle subsidy rose from £4,300,000 to £17,000,000 per annum without preventing a price increase, and, admitting the higher cost of feeding stuffs, it is likely that some of the subsidy is flowing into the hands of displaced auctioneers, now retained by the Ministry at a high salary. Centralised slaughtering, by closing down those insanitary slaughterhouses set up prior to the Licensing Act of 1870, has meant a big step forward, though the treatment of the small man was needlessly harsh. Indeed, as Mr. Bevin observed in correspondence to the Parliamentary Labour Party's Food Committee on 9th January 1940, 'it appears that the smaller people are going to be left out entirely'. Thus, though the Government have been right in selecting large units for supply, they have wrongly given representation in the Ministry to the wholesalers, and more particularly to importing syndicates whose chain of stores have been allowed to handle the home produced meat they once ignored. Despite the watertight Government control it also looks as if private monopoly has secured itself in two further sections of the industry. While not denying the advantages of transport rationalisation, it seems as if the Ministry, by making the Wholesale Meat Transport Association its sole agent, has given it powers to force all retailers into affiliation.

It has been a complaint that in the disposal of animal fats Levers rule the 'rough' and the National Fat Manufacturers' Association the edible fat market. In London Knight's, a subsidiary of Levers, dispose of all rough fats from the City Corporation slaughterhouse. As some 30 lb. of edible fat are extracted per head of cattle and 2,000,000 head are slaughtered annually, the issue of monopoly control is not an academic one. Indeed in view of the shortage of other fats the disappearance of edible fats from the market may have a serious effect upon the health of the working class population of London. The Ministry maintains that 'no monopoly exists outside the Ministry's control. The fats are the Ministry's property and are sold to individual melters for manufacture into dripping and tallow according to instructions'. It will

be seen, however, that the Ministry's statement in no way excludes the possibility of a monopoly to which the individual melter in his turn must sell; and it is admitted that the price of edible fats has risen from a pre-war average of 1.5 per lb. to 2.4 per lb. With regard to rough fats no comparison is possible since there was no fixed market price before the war—a pointer to subsequent monopolisation of the market. While dripping and tallow are mentioned the Ministry discreetly ignores margarine. In 1937 as a matter of fact 20,000,000 lb of animal fats—a third of the total home supply—were utilised for margarine manufacture. This figure roughly tallies with the 27% of home slaughtered cattle handled by the wholesalers. Since the war the other 73% retailers and cooperatives no longer see their fats. Most of the supply has been absorbed by the manufacturers, who purchase a greater ratio of animal products to avoid importing such large quantities of vegetable oils. This may be a desirable development, but if a saving is to be made why not give it to the Ministry, instead of to a committee of manufacturers, many of whom are connected with Levers.

MEAT CONTROL AND LABOUR PROBLEMS

Centralised slaughtering has undoubtedly improved the position of trade unions like N.U.D.A.W., who through the elimination of the private one-man concerns have secured a virtual monopoly of skilled labour. Wage agreements have thereby been facilitated and a definite shortage of specialists observed despite some unemployment on the closing of Smithfield. Some changes in the schedule of reserved occupations might ease the pressure by releasing meat pitchers, essential to the efficiency of large abattoirs, at 25 instead of 35; for centralised slaughtering demands specialists, and the numbers of unskilled labour still allowed to handle meat does definitely affect its quality. In the London area particularly, falling consumption of meat and rationalisation made large masses of unskilled labour redundant—a factor for which military service and remunerative war occupations compensated. Thus though London depots are still overstaffed, the surplus should be absorbed by the 35 year call-up. It must be realised, therefore, that rationalisation creates 'unemployment' and that the attitude of Unions toward the retention of such schemes will be determined by the efficient working of a post-war Ministry of reconstruction that will compensate its affected members by retraining upon demobilisation.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite all these criticisms the scheme has meant a great

improvement over the pre-war position and the complaint everywhere is that progress is not so good as it might be. It can be pleaded that there was an inevitable lack of experience in first operating so complex a project and that these difficulties have been largely overcome, as the recent reduction in meat prices suggest. Some compensation should be considered for the small man whom it is neither cheap nor practical to reinstate, while the monopolies should be closely watched, particularly in their attack upon cooperatives, whose position is greatly strengthened by their ownership of 101 state abattoirs. Apart from the issues of monopoly and compensation, the problem of health inspection is very urgent. There has been laxity on the part of Ministry of Food employees even at the cold storage depots, and so hygiene suffers. It might be possible to secure a stricter service by putting *all meat inspection* under the Ministry of Health's immediate control. The meat supply of the London area is a problem of its own. The obstruction of chartered rights was removed through the war, so that the police could close congested markets and depots. Traffic would gain by the continuation of the scheme after the war. Nevertheless the policy has been overdone and an insuperable burden placed on railway cold storage, which might be eased by the resumption of slaughtering in safer suburban abattoirs. Finally it would be better not to interfere too much in the present more efficient working of the machine, until the staff at the Ministry itself is radically overhauled.

The answer is suggested in a devastating chapter which traces the attitude of the Higher Command towards the tank and tank experts—under the title 'Wasted Brains'. All those trustful of authority should read how experts and enthusiasts were dispersed—one sent to an overseas station where there were no tanks, another given the job of running the Aldershot Tattoo and so on. In the conclusions the author questions some of the most widespread assumptions about military policy—such as the advisability of Britain assembling a huge conscript army.

C. S.

BRITISH LIBERTY IN DANGER by Ronald Kidd (Lawrence & Wishart 5/-)

Reveals fruits of eternal vigilance in manner just but tedious. Commenting on liberty between wars, shows chief constables getting powers and notoriety but none of glory of War Office. Good analysis of potentially dangerous wartime powers of Home Secretary. How likely are dangers one can't say. In criticising Dora concentrates on lessons of France and slurs over post 1918 British experiences. Combines lip service to need for wartime emergency powers with demand for *status quo in perpetuo*.

D. S.

SOCIAL ASPECTS OF CRIME IN ENGLAND BETWEEN THE WARS by Dr. Hermann Mannheim (Allen and Unwin 18/-)

Book-buying readers would rather split the price and split the book. The section lucidly describing the limitations of English Criminal Statistics is for criminologists. The second part discusses a selective set of crime-producing social factors, ignoring the variations of individual response to social stimuli. The chapter on Business Administration in relation to crime covers new ground. Unemployment, Alcoholism, and Gambling are discussed similarly. Dr Mannheim, handling too much material, writes less confidently than in his admirable *Dilemma of Penal Reform*.

J. S. C.

France

WHAT HAPPENED TO FRANCE by Gordon Waterfield (John Murray 5/-)

A small, but very readable and extremely interesting book by Reuter's former correspondent in France. The best account, military and civil, of the events of May and June that I have yet seen. Heartily recommended.

M. I. C.

Germany

AFTER HITLER by Axel Heyst (Minerva Publishing Co. 6/-)

GERMANY, JEKYLL AND HYDE by Sebastian Haffner (Secker & Warburg 8/6)

Both these books try to analyse Nazism, both peer into the future, but both were composed before May 1940. Haffner alone gives us something new, and valuable, on the Nazis; he assesses the strength of the various opinion-groups—leaders, labourers, non-politically-minded folk. Quite the best part of his book. As for Allied war-aims, both want a British-controlled Federal Europe though apparently of the loosest kind. Heyst wants a democratic monarchy in Germany, Poland to have Danzig and the whole of East Prussia. 'Manly severity,' he says, should characterise the peace, but 'revenge should be left to the Poles and the Czechs, and their reaction should not be suppressed'. Haffner wants to split up Germany again into some eight States plus a few Grand

Duchies inside them. Germany thus impotent, we could afford real reconciliation in the peace. Would not such treatment make the German's urge to national reunion and rehabilitation stronger than ever? Haffner's speech to the International Group in November suggests that he is moving forward from Splinterism.

P. L. Y.

GERMAN ECONOMY 1870-1940 by Gustav Stolper (Allen & Unwin 7/6)

A potted, popular economic history which traces the growth of State Capitalism from Bismarck onwards. Best in showing how German banks ran German industry, and how after 1930 the consummation of State control over the one meant State control over the other too. Weak in explaining the rise of the Nazis, and wrong to allege that they worked in 'unholy cooperation' with the Communists.

P. L. Y.

U S A

AMERICA OUR ALLY by H. N. Brailsford (Gollancz 2/6)

This book does little to dispel the air of unreality which the press has cast round the present and future of the American contribution to the British effort. Mr. Brailsford with his knowledge of America might have put fully to his readers some of the problems which 'All Aid' involves, as (1) the need to impose planning and control on industry and to reduce the consumer's share of production, (2) the friction over wages and hours which is certain to arise, (3) the finance problem. Moreover, I think he neglects the lack of agreement that there is in the States about what Britain is or should be fighting for. This may not affect American policy for the present, but it will certainly do so later, especially if Britain becomes the kind of revolutionary agent in Europe, which Mr. Brailsford hopes. For the rest, there is an interesting and sympathetic account of why American foreign policy is what it is, a black and for the most part convincing picture of America's position supposing Britain were defeated, and a concluding appeal for Anglo-American collaboration which I feel certain would achieve a just state of affairs in the world if only all the English-speaking people shared Mr. Brailsford's politics and (especially) his good will.

J. G.

WE, THE PEOPLE by Leo Huberman (Gollancz)

To put it Yankee fashion, a crackerjack piece of work. Mr. Huberman tells the American common man's story: how he came from the Old World by selling himself as an indentured servant for his passage money; how he met and mastered the problems of existence; how he fought and threw out the Red Coat; how he settled the West and filled the new factories and resisted his merchant-banker-landlord masters; how he lived and laboured to make the greatest industrial society of all; finally, how he suffered in depression, combined anew with his fellows for economic protection, and twice elected Franklin Roosevelt President. As economic history, the meat of it lies in its clear explanations of why Americans did things the way they did—why this kind of thing was produced in one place and that in another, why the Northerners were a different kind of people from the Southerners, why the Constitution was made as it was, why a Constitutional amendment protecting the freed negro slave prevented for 50 years any regulation whatsoever of American corporations. An incomparable collection of anecdotes, excerpts from private journals, speeches, and newspapers adds both point and wit to Mr. Huberman's instruction.

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J. G.

USSR

JUST AS I FEARED by Damaris Arklow (Allen & Unwin 7/6)

An amusing but grim novel of social life in Soviet Russia. The book should appeal to all those who wish to believe that "this Russia is a land of muddle and waste, of grandiose schemes and colossal incompetence, of poverty, starvation and stupidity."

B. D.

STALIN'S RUSSIA by Max Eastman (Allen & Unwin 7/6)

From a friend of the Bolshevik revolution, Max Eastman has become a bitter critic of Stalin's Russia. He is now no longer a revolutionary. He believes in political democracy, "not as a step to transcend, but as a foundation to build upon." He might have added, "or as an end to be achieved". For, if in Russia it is the Communist Party which dominates the political machine, may it not also be argued that the machine in the Western democracies, if less blatantly or absolutely, in turn is dominated by the private interests which own and control economic powers? In his revolt against political intolerance and mass executions, has Max Eastman not overlooked in Soviet Russia other more hopeful signs of democratic growth? The unique expansion of social services alone, which has brought to the backward Russian masses great new opportunities of health and education, has for the first time also placed in their hands the vital tools of self-government. The next step, perhaps, is not with Stalin! It is with the Russian people themselves.

B. D.

General

FEDERAL UNION IN PRACTICE by H. R. G. Greaves (Allen & Unwin 5/-)

Extremely useful—almost entirely informative and relevant to present needs. The author has given thumbnail sketches of eight actual federal governments, each in its historical background. He then illustrates the variety of practice among different federations in the constitution and powers assigned to the various organs of government. Anyone who is thinking about the future government of Europe will require to be master of the facts which are so conveniently brought together in this little volume.

B. W.

AN ENGLISHWOMAN IN THE U S S R by Violet Lansbury (Putnam 12/6)

Personal experiences of a woman who lived in the U S S R from 1925 to 1937, interlarded with simple-minded Communist propaganda. Rather longwinded and inclined to be dull, but not without interest for the years of N E P.

M. I. C.

ARMIES OF FREEMEN by Tom Wintringham (Routledge 5/-, Labour Book Service 2/6)

The author of *Deadlock War* returns to the theme that 'freedom, felt and making a difference, is almost a formula for winning wars.' Analyses several famous battles, including Thermopylae, Trenton, the defeat of the German Army in 1918, and the defence of Madrid. Attempts to show in each case how the autocratic armies were defeated by revolutionary armies because of the greater initiative, higher morale, and living, as against wooden discipline of the latter. Some surprising features: stress on novel character of British Tank Corps in 1918, and omission of any mention of Russian Red Army. Highly readable, but readers likely to be disappointed that there are no practical conclusions drawn.

T. S.

LEAGUE REFORM—An Analysis of Official Proposals and Discussions, 1936-1939 by S. Engels (Geneva Research Centre)

During the disastrous years 1936-1939 much study was given at Geneva by the 'Committee of Twenty-eight' and others, to problems such as the separation of the Covenant from the Peace Treaties, making the League's membership universal, the unanimity rule, peaceful settlement and peaceful change, and sanctions. This book reviews that work very fairly, showing incidentally that some of it was badly done. Much of the material on which it is based is not yet publicly obtainable. The book will be of service to all serious students of the problems of constituting a more effective international authority than the League.

W. A. F.
